

MENNONITE BOARD OF MISSIONS

BOX 370

ELKHART, INDIANA 46514

219/294-7523

CABLE: MENBOARD

11/9/76

11/15 11/9/76 R

11/16 Tm's Est visit to Whitman - face
unsourced statement to AI or church go.
So as not to prejudice himself or stay in
Arg or Embassy.

November 9, 1976

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Delbert and Ruth Erb

In a recent consultation between Patty, Enrique, John and Bonny, John Howard and myself, it was agreed that I should write a letter to accompany the one which Patricia is writing you and is enclosed. I have read Patricia's letter to you and in light of the limited background in her letter, I feel it appropriate to give more information.

During the time of Patricia's abduction, I had calls from the Berkley, California and New York City based groups known as the Solidarity Committee with the Argentine people (SCAP). The name itself raised doubts in my mind and I did not provide them with any information other than to verify that Patricia was being held.

Since her release, we have had persistent contacts from them, including calls and a personal visit by one of their people who lives and works in Toronto. We have also had extensive talks with Delton Franz, MCC Washington office, who has investigated the nature of the groups and advised us regarding them. SCAP groups are not extremist groups. "They do believe in working within the system and encouraging members of Congress to address the problems of human rights violations in Latin America." (Taken from a letter of Delton Franz to me.) They publish a bulletin called Argentina Outreach of which I have a copy. It seems to be a factual publication. All indications we can secure seem to indicate that they are a legitimate, deeply concerned group. Our major contact has been with a Mr. Alex Esteverana of the Toronto group. (They in Canada carry a different name but are a chapter of the SCAP organization.) I am enclosing a copy of a letter I received recently which would seem to verify what Delton Franz has reported from his contacts with Tom Quigley of the U.S. Catholic Conference Office of Justice and Peace.

This group is aware that Patricia knows firsthand what goes on in the detention camps and that she can "testify" to have seen persons in Campo de Mayo that have been assumed to be dead. It is the strong feeling of the SCAP group that Patricia has a moral obligation to declare what she knows in order to inform the OEA more fully and the public and the Argentine government of these facts thus, hopefully, helping those who are being held as well as their families and to bring pressure on the Argentine government to change its methods because of public/international pressures.

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: ☐ In Part ☐ In Full

☐ Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade to

Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

AN AGENCY OF THE MENNONITE CHURCH

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November 9, 1976

Alex Esteverena came to Elkhart and talked with Patricia personally about these matters. John and I knew that he was coming and gave our consent to him having an interview with Patty. She did not give him information. Rather, she heard their side of the story and feels considerable urgency to make some public-for the record statement. This is what she consulted with Johns, John Howards and I about.

As a group we agreed on the following:

- 1) Since declarations of this nature could have adverse effects on your continuing ministry there, we must consult with you and seek your opinion; i.e., approval or disapproval from you before making additional statements
- 2) Urge that you consult with the U.S. Consul there and inform us of his opinion
- 3) If a release is to be given that it be done via a church group or Amnesty International rather than any other group(s). John Howard suggested that Amnesty International could ask Patty to verify certain information which they could be given "unofficially" thus making it their release rather than a direct statement from Patricia. The other option would be for us to release such information. In the letter from Delton Franz, he indicates that we would be advised to avoid any identification with any group other than church agencies working on Latin America issues such as those with whom MCC cooperates. The problem with becoming identified with more political groups is that she and the Mission Board's prophetic word to our government (State Department and Congress) would, because of that association, quickly be dissipated. The "information" that would be released is the names of persons who she recognized and saw alive in Campo de Mayo and a statement regarding where persons are being held and how they are treated.
- 4) If you feel we ought to pursue the idea, we would want to take further counsel with Delton Franz, Tom Quigley and Fred Rondon of the Argentine Desk, U.S. State Department before proceeding with such a statement and/or deciding how it would be released.

The fact that Patricia, in the midst of her own suffering, memorized names of persons who are being held in Campo de Mayo, in order to make those names public, indicates her deep humanitarian concerns. She did what she could by releasing those names via prisoners in De Voto. She now feels that perhaps more needs to be done. There is no doubt that the contact from the SCAP group has heightened that feeling although she did indicate to us that she was not feeling totally satisfied

Delbert and Ruth Erb

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with not making additional statements publicly. Personally, I feel that a decision to release or not release more information should be based on our best judgment and counsel and not as a result of pressure from outside groups, even though such groups may be legitimate and may help sharpen our awareness of our responsibility.

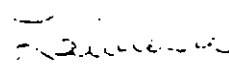
For obvious reasons, I am sending this letter via the U.S. Embassy. You may wish to share this letter with them.

We are not wanting to pressure you but rather need your opinion and counsel particularly since such information could be interpreted by the Argentine government as being embarrassing to them.

We are anxious to have word from you as to how things are going with you there. Perhaps we should assume that no news is good news.

May the Lord continue to abundantly bless you and give you strength for these difficult days.

Yours in Christ,


Lawrence H. Greaser
Associate Secretary
Overseas Missions

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cc: Patty Erb

P.S. I am enclosing a copy of a letter received from William Janzen recently. The only reason for including it is to give you a feel a the kind of organization that has been in contact with us and how they are working at these human rights problems.